

## Walking on Water : Sink or Swim

### The Character of the Chaplain in Correctional Ministry

I recall an experience from my childhood when I was taken out on a boat to fish. Without any warning, I was thrown overboard as the adults watched to see if I would swim or sink. Naturally, I sank like a rock. Since that day, swimming has not been my forte.

Similarly, new chaplains may enter the field with the expectation of navigating calm and steady waters. However, it is crucial to understand that, unexpectedly, they will be thrust into a tumultuous ocean of chaos and moral challenges. The structured learning from Bible college and seminary may initially seem inadequate within the complex prison environment. Inmates' questions can often feel as challenging as the temptations faced by Jesus during his forty days in the wilderness.

To thrive in such an environment, chaplains must be adaptable, resilient, and deeply empathetic. They should be prepared to apply their knowledge in unconventional ways and rely on their faith and inner strength to guide them through the unpredictable and often daunting situations they will encounter.

Correctional chaplaincy remains a unique and often overlooked field within the clergy. Despite its importance, specific educational programs tailored for correctional chaplains are scarce. Aspiring prison ministers frequently grapple with questions about their readiness: Did they take the right courses? Will their educational background suffice? What major should they pursue?

However, the true preparation for prison chaplaincy extends beyond formal degrees or credit hours. It lies in the crucible of ministry experience, the testing of one's consecrated life, and a deep passion for serving as a sacred minister of God. While accredited ministry degrees have their place, the paramount focus should be on developing the chaplain's character.

In this chapter, we delve into the essential qualities that correctional chaplains must cultivate. These qualities are not primarily acquired within the walls of educational institutions but rather in the trenches of real-world ministry. From their initial interactions behind bars to their final calls, chaplains are expected to be seasoned, proven leaders—adults who exemplify godliness.

Moral character emerges as the linchpin of a prison chaplain's long-term success or failure. Those contemplating a career in corrections must recognize this truth. Only chaplains with unwavering moral integrity will leave a legacy of fruitful ministry, bringing glory to God.

To illustrate further, consider the Apostle Peter. His impulsive decisions and failures notwithstanding, Peter demonstrated remarkable faith and leadership when he stepped out of the boat to walk on water toward Jesus. Similarly, correctional chaplains require exceptional leadership skills and unshakable character from the moment they enter a prison. They must be willing to venture where others fear to tread, just as Peter did. Even when faced with impossible situations, they must keep their eyes fixed on their spiritual calling.<sup>1</sup>

In summary, correctional chaplains must cultivate a character akin to Peter's—a blend of faith, resilience, and unwavering commitment. By doing so, they can navigate the challenges of prison ministry and make a lasting impact within the walls of confinement.

## **The Role of Correctional Chaplains: A Call to Leadership and Moral Character**

Over three decades ago, Dr. Dale Pace<sup>2</sup> eloquently outlined the significant responsibilities that correctional chaplain's shoulder. Aspiring correctional chaplains must fully grasp these obligations before embarking on this unique ministry. Their multifaceted role extends beyond the prison walls, encompassing leadership within correctional facilities and the development of faith communities among incarcerated individuals.

Chaplains are the prophetic voices that resonate and light up the dark sinful halls of corrections. Correctional chaplains serve as both spiritual leaders and prophets. Within the Church, they draw attention to the specific needs of prison ministry. Simultaneously, they act as the conscience of the criminal justice system, advocating for justice, compassion, and ethical treatment.

Outstanding leadership skills and unwavering moral character are prerequisites for chaplains to effectively fulfill this dual role. They become agents of change—challenging congregations to engage compassionately and urging prison administrations to empower faith communities behind bars.

The chaplain, being consecrated to the Lord in faith and divine love, must learn to navigate the many challenges he/she will face. In my experience supervising chaplains across different prisons, I encountered situations where predecessors were dismissed due to unbecoming behavior. These incidents cast a shadow over the chaplaincy office, necessitating a deliberate effort to restore trust and illuminate the path with the light of the gospel.

Remarkably, some custody staff continued to view all chaplains with suspicion. Thus, correctional chaplains must recognize that their actions reverberate far beyond their immediate context. Striving to be above reproach becomes a daily commitment—one that keeps them anchored to their faith and prevents moral lapses.

The standard of “Above Reproach”<sup>3</sup> doesn't imply sinless perfection, an unattainable ideal. Instead, it signifies consistent honesty. Chaplains must live in a manner that aligns with their preaching, ensuring their actions never undermine their ministry or the confidence of those they serve.<sup>4</sup>

Imperfections are inevitable, but how chaplains respond to their own mistakes matters. People remember not only the missteps but also the pursuit of Christlikeness—the unwavering commitment to a consecrated life.<sup>5</sup>

Navigating the halls of corrections often overwhelms the chaplain with its total depravity. To the extent that they begin to fall into the rut of unholiness so they ‘blend in’ with the others. Achieving a consecrated holy life requires vigilance. Chaplains must confront overlooked conditions prevalent in prison ministry. They must approach the inmate population with unconditional compassion, recognizing the inherent worth of everyone.

In doing so, they become visionary voices—exposing moral deficiencies within the criminal justice system and challenging apathy from the religious community.

## **The Chaplain's Commitment: Sin, Love, and Sacrifice**

Correctional chaplains shoulder a weighty responsibility—one that extends beyond the prison walls. Their ministry involves more than routine tasks; it demands a vision rooted in unwavering principles: an understanding of sin, an unconditional love for those they serve, and a willingness to make sacrificial choices for the welfare of others.

Public Scrutiny and Private Integrity require that Chaplains must resolve never to engage in private actions that would not withstand public scrutiny. Transparency and consistency are paramount. Aligning with scriptural principles

ensures that their conduct remains above reproach. Guiding Principles for Chaplains is not simply a choice. But a commitment of constraining love for their Lord.

Shame and Kingdom Representation causes the chaplain to avoid actions that bring shame to the kingdom they represent. Their behavior reflects not only on themselves but also on the larger spiritual community. Upholding the honor of God's work requires vigilance.

Chaplains must safeguard their self-worth and vulnerability. Actions that diminish their value compromise their effectiveness. Avoiding vulnerability to negative influences—whether internal or external—is essential.

Charles Spurgeon's is often called "the prince of preachers." Not so much for his eloquent and impactful sermons. But for his call to the sacrificial character of the men of God. Charles Spurgeon wisely cautioned against self-indulgence. Chaplains, as leaders, must master their passions and habits.<sup>6</sup> Holiness—a consistent, consecrated character—is both a necessity and an ornament. It is the sacred oil that makes their ministry fragrant to God and humanity.

Accountability and Transparency are a fading trend in religious circles. Chaplains ministering in challenging environments—where cultural evils persist—must guard against self-righteousness. To maintain consecration, confidential input from trusted partners is crucial. Just as Christ had His inner circle, chaplains need fellow clergy who hold them accountable. Transparency, even in personal matters, fosters growth and resilience.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Crucial Role of Integrity in Chaplaincy and Leadership**

Across various sectors—whether day care centers, businesses, or religious institutions—scandals have left indelible marks. In each case, the erosion of credibility can be traced back to the level of truth exhibited by individuals within those organizations. Integrity, therefore, emerges as a cornerstone of effective leadership.<sup>8</sup> Many newcomer chaplains fail to define the very essence of the required and expected reliability of holy men of God.

*In corrections a chaplain without integrity and honesty built on high standards and values of the Bible and developed consistently over time will never succeed.*

The personification of leadership and integrity embodies the main characteristic of a leader. It implies sound morals and freedom from corrupting influences. In today's business landscape, the absence of integrity is often lamented—a trait sorely lacking.<sup>9</sup> In fact, a recent survey of 1,300 senior executives revealed that integrity ranks as the most crucial human quality for business success. Seventy-one percent placed it at the top of a list of sixteen traits responsible for executive effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>

The perplexing reality of these neglected expectations of lack of veracity permeates the body of Christ—the Church—and extends to chaplaincy. As chaplains, we must rise to the challenge of setting the standard for personal authenticity. Our lives should exemplify leadership and serve as models for others. Falling victim to scandal or disgrace is unacceptable; our calling demands more.

Often the bible college-seminary training in the bible is brushed aside when clearly the New Testament standards are the precise need for chaplaincy leadership. Guided by the Word of God continues to be my daily mantra for supervising skills. Chaplains, like New Testament leaders, are called to assist people in worship and set an example. Our conduct and

character should align with the Word of God—the ultimate guide for leadership transformation. The Bible isn't merely a textbook; it's a manual for shaping the life of those aspiring to lead.<sup>11</sup>

The most sorrowful and astonishing representation of chaplains is the lack of transparency and the Holy Spirit influence. The Chaplain's life should be so defined by divine decency that accusations against them seem incredulous. Striving for these standards yields trust, reputation, and credibility.

Unfortunately, Chaplains may be caught between Transparency vs. Camouflage. Like the public leaders who often use social media to camouflage their private lives, avoiding scrutiny. In contrast, chaplains should embrace transparency. Our public life should mirror our private life in Christ. Transparency fosters trust and authenticity.

The Enduring Legacy to be sought by chaplains is their character that should extend beyond their tenure:<sup>12</sup> It influences others long after they've moved on. Academic achievements and accomplishments pale in comparison to the impact of personal honor.

Many chaplains attempt to become another eloquent influential 'prince of preachers.' Yet, it is the genuineness behind the sermon that makes the message and messenger stand apart from the rest.

John Maxwell's seven core components of fortitude yield invaluable lessons. Trust, influence, and reputation cannot be faked or bought—they emerge from genuine pursuit. The chaplain's example of authenticity, even in challenging situations, becomes their most powerful sermon.<sup>13</sup>

The pursuit of excellence in chaplaincy is a lifelong endeavor, devoid of shortcuts or easy lessons. It is during the most challenging times that a chaplain's true virtues are revealed. As Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. aptly stated, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."<sup>14</sup>

Life, akin to a vise, will at times exert pressure, revealing what lies within. We cannot offer what we do not possess. While image may promise much, it often delivers little; rectitude, however, never disappoints.<sup>15</sup>

In the corrections environment, it takes considerable time for chaplains to establish their image, earn the trust of others, and build a reputation for goodness. This is achieved through self-discipline, inner trust, and a steadfast commitment to honesty in all situations.<sup>16</sup> Chaplains who step into leadership roles must recognize that their responsibilities extend beyond merely imparting information to keep the organization functioning. They must lead by example, embodying the principles they teach to make their organization hugely influential. If the dual elements of teaching the truth and living by the truth are not in harmony, both the chaplain and the organization will fail. When a leader's character falters and causes a scandal, the entire organization is thrown into chaos.<sup>17</sup> If a leader's associates perceive them as insincere or lacking integrity, failure is inevitable. The foremost requirement for any leader is integrity; maintaining it ensures the stability of the organization.<sup>18</sup>

In the corrections setting, a chaplain who does not demonstrate integrity is destined to fail. Inmates possess an uncanny ability to see through any false facade. Conversely, chaplains who are divinely anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit can overcome daily challenges, leading lives of integrity and divine consecration as a direct result of God's providential guidance.<sup>19</sup>

### **God must consecrate a Chaplain.**

When God calls an individual to chaplaincy in corrections, three main characteristics must be evident: a true sense of calling, an unwavering commitment to duty, and a clear religious conviction.

A true sense of calling is the cornerstone of ministry, particularly for chaplains who face times of great loss, overwhelming tragedy, and unavoidable heartbreak. During these moments, chaplains experience a unique sense of divine partnership with God. A strong conviction of God's calling provides the necessary confidence to be courageous in the face of adversity, doubt, and fear.

A chaplain must first be called by God to the Christian ministry. However, it is not merely about knowing one is called; it is the assurance of God's calling to chaplaincy ministry that is essential. The bane of Christianity has always been those who seek ministry as a profession without the call of God. If Jesus Christ does not choose a chaplain, there will be no lasting fruit in their ministry.<sup>20</sup>

The divine call lays the foundation for an unwavering commitment to a lifestyle of sacrificial giving to the flock and the ministry itself. As John 15:13 states, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Such a level of commitment does not come easily and will not be found in those without a clear conviction of their calling to chaplaincy.

Regrettably, in many Christian circles, correctional chaplains are often judged as those who failed at the pastorate. Many Bible College students view chaplaincy as a "plan B" ministry for those who failed in "plan A." This perception does little to boost the confidence of those called to chaplaincy and creates an image of being second-rate clergy members.

Although the perception of correctional chaplaincy has improved over the past two decades, significant issues persist. As Dr. Dale Pace<sup>21</sup> noted over thirty years ago, correctional chaplaincy requires the best possible ministers because they must minister to people from varied racial, social, economic, and educational backgrounds, with severe personal problems, in a more adverse environment than most pastors' encounter. However, instead of drawing from the cream of the ministerial crop, correctional chaplaincy often draws from the dregs. In the mid-1970s, 16 percent of Protestant chaplains surveyed openly stated they entered chaplaincy because divorce had interrupted their pastoral careers, they were disillusioned with the church, or they needed jobs or more money. Part of the reason for less than the best clergy entering chaplaincy lies in the attitude of most church groups toward chaplains. Often, chaplains are excluded from normal ministerial privileges in their denomination. Only when the Church honors correctional chaplains as highly as missionaries, military chaplains, or pastors will there be adequate numbers of excellent clergy for correctional chaplaincy.

Unfortunately, current cultural perceptions view clergy as social dropouts, believing those who enter ministry were not successful in a "real" job. This causes many to lower their expectations of clergy and prison chaplains. Charles Spurgeon prophetically addressed this sentiment decades ago, stating, "I have met ten, twenty, a hundred brethren, who have pleaded that they were sure, quite sure that they were called to the ministry—they were quite certain of it, because they had failed at everything else."<sup>22</sup>

Chaplain Jim Spence offers valuable insights when reflecting on his call and determining if one is called to prison chaplaincy. He states, "How do I know that? The Word of God, the inward witness of the Holy Spirit, and life's circumstances come into line to confirm a specific call to ministry. As it was for me, I have seen that entering prison ministry for many is a process that occurs in stages as people obey God faithfully."<sup>23</sup> Similar to ordination, clarifying one's call to chaplaincy may take considerable time.

Regrettably, the church does not place the call and ordination to prison ministry at the same level of need for and importance of the pastorate. Consequently, chaplains may find it challenging to seek ordination. Yet, the inmate population is a sophisticated and expectant “church behind the walls.” This body of believers often includes hopeful church officers and talented members of the music ministry. Many prisons today house spiritually dynamic congregations within their razor wire fences. These “churches behind the walls” have vibrant ministries requiring a shepherd, not just a degreed chaplain or hireling. It is a viable calling consecrated by God for His servant.

The characteristics of the call to the pastorate are identical to those for correctional chaplains: (1) An intense, all-absorbing desire, (2) Aptness to teach and instruct, (3) A visible measure of conversion work, and (4) Preaching acceptably to the people of God.<sup>24</sup> These indicators confirm God’s call to the pastorate and are augmented in chaplaincy.

For example, an absorbing desire is vital to enter a place filled with a concentration of proven sinners housed in deplorable conditions. Your aptness to teach will depend more on your anointed call than your expertise in the pulpit. Conversion in prison will far exceed that of any church sanctuary. Finally, preaching well will mean that your messages from God will relate to those in prison far more than those in the pews.

At the end of the day, those who can answer “yes” to the following questions are advised to continue pursuing ministry in chaplaincy: “Is there confirmation? Is there appropriate giftedness? Is there an insatiable longing for the ministry? Finally, is there a life of integrity?” If anyone can answer these questions affirmatively, they can confidently say that they indeed have the call of God to pursue ministerial options.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Chaplain Must Be Consecrated by the Christian Community**

Typing the word “ordination” into a search engine reveals how easy it is, overnight, to become an ordained minister. With millions of hits, titles such as “Free Online Ordination,” “Bid on Ordination Now,” or “Be Ordained Now” indicate just how easily and quickly one can be legally ordained. These online offers have done extensive damage to the credibility, integrity, and dignity of the timeless rite of ordination.

Often, ordination is perceived as a single event. Yet, the process of ordination takes place over a considerable period. This is true for several reasons. First, the scriptural support for ordination implies that it is a time for testing. Second, the scriptural rationale for ordination indicates a process that demands a time for trusting. Third, this process takes time for training that will validate the truly called chaplains.<sup>26</sup>

In contemporary America, every prison mandate ordination—a process overseen by an endorsing authority. Chaplains seeking positions within these facilities must invest time and effort in completing this rigorous process. As chaplains navigate the ordination journey, they quickly recognize that their ordination and subsequent placement in correctional institutions are highly visible events. Often, commissioners or other government leaders appoint chaplains to these critical roles. Consequently, those responsible for making these appointments naturally gravitate toward candidates with strong public and denominational reputations.

This practice of ordination and public recognition is not novel; it traces back to the early church. In those times, ordination involved a period of testing and trials, treated with the same dignity as any other professional certification. The office of ordained clergy carried significant accountability—they were expected to excel in nurturing their congregations.<sup>27</sup>

However, in our contemporary context, the ordination process has sometimes become diluted, leading to misunderstandings. To clarify, ordination designates the setting aside of a minister for a specific calling that necessitates

ordination. Conversely, a license to preach represents the church's approval and recommendation for an individual to serve as a minister of the Gospel. When a congregation ordains someone, it establishes substantial credibility.<sup>28</sup>

Licensing, on the other hand, publicly commends a brother within the Christian community, affirming that he should exercise his gifts for the Lord in a prayerful atmosphere. Ordination, whether for a pastor, chaplain, staff assignment, evangelist, or other specified role, involves the formal investiture of church officers with official authority. While ordination is scripturally grounded, it is essential to recognize that ultimate ministerial authority stems from the Holy Spirit's call and the church's election. Ordination merely serves as the public recognition and completion of this divine appointment.

For aspiring ministers, especially those awaiting full ordination, volunteering in prison ministry offers an ideal testing ground. Within the prison environment, they can clarify their calling, refine their doctrinal understanding, hone their sermons, and learn to scripturally address a wide range of conflicts.

In their book *The Work of the Chaplain*, the authors consistently emphasize the need for this season of growth and development." In the realm of chaplain ministry, patience is paramount. Relationships take time to develop, and God Himself desires to cultivate enduring connections with those called to this sacred service. As chaplains embark on their journey, they can trust that God orchestrates the right moments for training, education, and opportunity. His encouragement and nurturing presence remain constant.

Moreover, God graciously endows chaplains with specific gifts and aptitudes precisely when needed. However, this divine timing requires the right attitude and unwavering patience—a willingness to wait for the fullness of God's appointed time.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Divine Purpose of a Consecrated Chaplaincy**

Drawing inspiration from the architectural world, where form follows function, chaplaincy candidates must similarly grasp the purpose behind their calling. Understanding the church's existence and its role is essential for effective chaplaincy. Just as an architect must comprehend a building's purpose before designing its form, chaplains must align their philosophy of ministry with the church's biblical purposes.<sup>30</sup>

Navigating the diverse inmate population presents unique challenges. Inmates and community volunteers alike scrutinize the chaplain's approach. Ensuring that the correctional facility's church fulfills essential biblical purposes involves bridging denominational gaps and addressing critics. Interestingly, the walls that divide denominations outside often crumble within prison walls, leaving only the core scriptural principles centered on Jesus Christ.<sup>31</sup>

As chaplains labor within these confines, their tasks remain consistent, but their approach adapts to the inmate population. Preaching truth becomes a delicate balance—dogmatic yet understandable. Many inmates are spiritual novices, and overly complex theological discussions risk losing their attention. Chaplains should anticipate respectful challenges to church dogma—not as contradiction but as genuine inquiry. Thus, patiently explaining their stance on various truths becomes a vital part of their ministry.

### **Navigating Challenges and Sacrifices in Chaplaincy: A Call to Equipping**

In the realm of chaplaincy, dogma—the established beliefs of the church—faces consistent scrutiny. However, this isn't necessarily a desire to contradict; rather, it reflects a genuine thirst for understanding. As chaplains engage with

inmates, they find themselves frequently explaining their positions on critical matters such as punishment, forgiveness, and even the death penalty. Importantly, refuting truth doesn't always require being right at all costs; sometimes, stepping away from an argument serves a greater purpose.

Chaplains must guard against complacency, especially when dealing with an inmate population perceived as naive. Their theological grasp must remain clear and well-divided—a result of continuous study. Diligently building the church within correctional facilities becomes non-negotiable. The challenges faced by chaplains far exceed those encountered by the average church member on the outside. Interestingly, inmates often gauge a chaplain's love not by theological prowess but by the time devoted to them—an unspoken sermon preached through actions.<sup>32</sup>

The life and ministry of a pastor directly correlate with their view of God. A humble pastor, grounded in a proper understanding of God, exudes confidence in God's power, commitment to God's truth, alignment with God's will, compulsion driven by God's knowledge, and an unwavering focus on God's glory.<sup>33</sup>

To minister effectively within prison walls while advancing the kingdom, chaplains require much prayer, abundant grace, and a humble ego. They encounter a diverse array of personalities and self-proclaimed prophets. Chaplaincy in corrections demands a sacrificial lifestyle akin to that exemplified by Christ Himself.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Role of Sacrifice in Consecrated Ministry Performance**

Unlocking God's blessings for ministry to inmates' hinges on sacrificing time—the most precious asset—for people. Despite limited resources, including financial constraints and a lean staff, chaplains often work well beyond a standard forty-hour week. Their commitment lies in equipping people rather than merely fulfilling programming quotas.

Why, then, might some be tempted to prioritize developing innovative programs over investing in people? The answer lies in the time-intensive nature of people's development. While creating programs seems straightforward, true leadership development necessitates the chaplain's time and willingness to make sacrifices.

Volunteers rally behind a chaplain's leadership when they witness personal sacrifice. A leader who invests time in others gains loyal followers willing to grow alongside them. However, chaplains must remain vigilant—valuing people over personal gain. Regular self-evaluation deepens their appreciation for others' contributions. Their focus centers on how people can reach their potential within the context of consecrated ministry.<sup>35</sup>

Effective chaplains exhibit a passion for equipping members of the ministry leadership team. Their goal? To propel individuals beyond previous expectations, imparting vision, evaluating potential leaders, providing necessary tools, and fostering growth.

### **Equipping Future Leaders: The Art of Chaplaincy**

A chaplain embodies a multifaceted role—one that involves imparting vision, evaluating potential leaders, equipping them with essential tools, and providing guidance as they embark on their leadership journey. However, the focus extends beyond immediate gains; it centers on long-term multiplication. Prioritizing the development and training of potential leaders outweighs the mere addition of new volunteers.

Chaplains must direct their attention toward the individuals God leads into their ministry sphere. Recognizing and nurturing people's innate gifts for leadership becomes crucial to prevent burnout. A wise approach involves loving



everyone while investing significantly in the top 20 percent—the emerging leaders. Transparency, mentorship, and strategic growth planning create a cohesive team.

Creating a motivating atmosphere rest squarely on the chaplain’s shoulders. The true secret lies in crafting an environment free from demotivating influences. Within prison walls, this task demands creativity—a delicate balance between removing negatives and fostering growth.

Over time, chaplains grapple with the complexity of leadership development. Equipping others follows a step-by-step process—an empirical science. However, true leadership development transcends mere steps; it’s an art woven throughout the entire journey. Like a skilled parent imparting life lesson, chaplains help potential leaders discover their latent abilities, building character by drawing out their best qualities.

When great leaders endorse our efforts, we glimpse expanded possibilities. Their sacrificial support propels us to achieve more. Indeed, good leaders cultivate followers who, in turn, become leaders themselves—a cycle of growth and influence. Christ Himself exemplified this principle.

### **Servant Leadership: A Cornerstone of Consecrated Ministry**

Initially, the phrase “servant leadership” may appear contradictory. How can one simultaneously be a servant and a leader? Yet, when we consider Jesus Christ—the ultimate source of this leadership style—the paradox dissolves. All who follow Him should emulate this approach. Jesus, as the Great Shepherd, epitomized servant leadership: “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, through the blood of the eternal covenant” (Hebrews 13:20).

A servant leader discerns that true leadership lies in identifying others’ needs and ministering to them. When people’s needs are met, they willingly follow. Jesus Himself prioritized feeding His flock—an essential duty for any shepherd.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Shepherd’s Mandate: Feeding the Flock**

In the poignant encounter between Jesus and Peter, recorded in John 21, Jesus forcefully emphasized the critical role of feeding the sheep. Twice, He employed the term “bosko,” which translates to “I feed” (verses 15 and 17). The shepherd’s primary objective isn’t to please the sheep but to nourish them—not with superficial tidbits but with substantial, soul-enriching biblical truth. Those who neglect this duty prove themselves unfit for shepherding (see Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:2-10).<sup>37</sup>

Jay Adams, in his work *Shepherding God’s Flock*, draws from Psalm 23 to illuminate additional essential aspects of servant leadership:

1. **Concern for Individual Sheep:** A shepherd’s heart extends to everyone within the flock.
2. **Rest for the Sheep:** Providing rest and solace amid life’s challenges.
3. **Daily Provisions:** Ensuring sustenance—both physical and spiritual.
4. **Refreshment and Encouragement:** Nurturing weary souls.
5. **Guidance and Leadership:** Steadfastly leading toward green pastures.
6. **Instruction, Training, and Discipline:** Shaping character and maturity.
7. **Motivation and Goal Setting:** Inspiring purposeful living.

8. **Security and Protection:** Shielding from harm.
9. **Personal Fellowship and Loving Friendship:** Building authentic connections.<sup>38</sup>

These qualities distinctly set apart servant leadership from its worldly counterpart. Traits like feeding the flock, fostering fellowship, and cultivating friendship rarely feature in the job descriptions of CEOs. However, three critical dimensions distinguish servant leadership: willingness to endure reproach, vulnerability to risk, and readiness for significant sacrifice. Chaplains who view their role as more than a vocation—those who respond to God’s call—exhibit these traits in their labor.<sup>39</sup>

When chaplains operate from a place of love and unwavering commitment to their calling, they find themselves under God’s protective care. The flock they tend is diverse, often divided over minor issues. The chaplain’s mission remains clear: keep the focus unwaveringly on Jesus Christ. Amid the challenges of ministry, chaplains unite their flock by emphasizing worship, diligent study of Christ’s teachings, and growth in knowledge and fellowship.

In this spiritual battle, chaplains adopt a defensive posture against disruptive forces. As the apostle Paul admonished the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, they must face the reality of enemy attacks. These assaults often emerge from within the flock—like “savage wolves.” Vigilance becomes the watchword for church leaders, ever alert to maintain unity and protect the fold.

### **The Compassionate Shepherd: Leadership Lessons from Acts 20**

In Acts 20, the apostle Paul imparts crucial wisdom to the Ephesian elders, emphasizing the reality of enemy attacks within the community of believers. These attacks, likened to the efforts of “savage wolves,” emerge from within the flock itself. As leaders, the elders must remain vigilant, ever watchful against division and harm (Acts 20:20, 30).

Paul’s counsel extends beyond mere vigilance. He exhorts the elders to engage with their congregation intimately, even shedding tears as they admonish and guide. Their responsibility is not merely administrative; it’s deeply relational. Entrusting the flock to God through prayer, they anticipate growth through the study of Scripture (Acts 20:31-32).

However, there exists another extreme—the chaplains in prison ministry who lack compassion for their charges. These leaders, devoid of sacrificial love, may fall into legalistic patterns. Their duty becomes a burden, devoid of heartfelt commitment. In stark contrast, Jesus Christ exemplified sacrificial love, laying down His life for His followers and attending to their holistic needs.<sup>40</sup>

The caring shepherd, like the Good Shepherd, loves the sheep. This affectionate leadership involves knowing each sheep by name, carrying them close, and being willing to lay down one’s life for their well-being (Isaiah 40:11; John 10:3, 11).<sup>41</sup>

Preaching, while essential, must be accompanied by genuine love for the congregation. Our Lord, upon seeing the multitudes, was “filled with compassion.” Without this compassion, preaching lacks its vital element—pathos. A pulpit devoid of love is mere legalism.

Seminarians aspiring to servant leadership should recognize that impactful ministry transcends motivational sermons. Robert Anderson aptly reminds us that a pastor’s competence—whether in speaking, teaching, or administration—pales in significance if not underpinned by tangible, personal love for the people. A true shepherd models Christ’s character, demonstrating love through action.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, love—the glue that binds all aspects of leadership—is indispensable for those who shepherd God’s flock. It transforms duty into devotion and legalism into genuine care .

### **Ethical Leadership and Accountability in Prison Chaplaincy**

In the realm of pastoral leadership, the ideal shepherd is not one who drives the flock with a whip but rather one who gently encourages, uplifts, and guides. This compassionate approach aligns with the heart of Jesus—the Good Shepherd—who leads His sheep toward greater accomplishments even when they stumble. Rather than harshly criticizing their insufficiencies, the shepherd highlights what was done well and offers constructive pathways for improvement. This model of leadership fosters growth and resilience within the flock.

However, the context shifts significantly for chaplains serving in correctional facilities. These servant leaders encounter unique challenges, including the scrutiny of administrators. Unlike disciplinary measures that often lack forgiveness and reconciliation, servant leadership—rooted in scriptural principles—requires trust that God will ultimately vindicate their actions. Chaplains must relinquish the need to justify themselves and instead rely on divine validation.

Chaplains in prison ministry occupy a prominent public profile. They are accountable not only to God but also to the religious communities both inside and outside the prison walls. Their conduct—both private and public—must reflect godliness. While some may assume a false sense of security due to less direct oversight, wise chaplains recognize the need for self-accountability. They voluntarily adhere to professional ethics, understanding that their conscience aligns with legal, faith-based, and institutional standards.<sup>43</sup>

To maintain their moral compass, chaplains benefit from joining ministerial, educational, or social organizations. Peer support within these networks encourages fidelity to their calling. The daily interactions in prison environments can subtly influence behavior, so vigilance is essential. Character flaws and missteps can be weaponized against chaplains, underscoring the importance of maintaining high ethical standards and periodically self-assessing their alignment with their calling.

Moreover, security and safety considerations are paramount. Chaplains must cultivate heightened awareness to gain the trust of staff and inmates. Neglecting security concerns can have dire consequences, jeopardizing lives and professional integrity. Vigilance, rather than complacency, ensures the safety of all involved in the correctional setting.

In summary, ethical leadership for prison chaplains involves not only preaching but also embodying compassion, accountability, and unwavering moral standards. By doing so, they honor their sacred role and contribute to the well-being of those they serve.

### **Security, Confidentiality, and Ethical Boundaries in Prison Chaplaincy**

Security stands as the paramount concern for prison officials, leading them to establish a comprehensive set of rules to safeguard the facility. As a prison chaplain, your role involves not only understanding these rules but actively assisting in maintaining security. It’s essential to recognize that the legal norms protecting employees outside prison do not necessarily apply within its walls. Instances abound where both paid and volunteer chaplains faced abrupt termination due to oversight in prioritizing security concerns. Therefore, unwavering adherence to all prison rules—no matter how seemingly trivial—is imperative for chaplains.<sup>44</sup>

**Confidentiality as a Cornerstone:** Successful chaplaincy hinges on the ability to maintain confidentiality. During counseling sessions and interactions, chaplains gain insight into the lives of inmates and their families. However, releasing any of this confidential information to the public is strictly prohibited. Recent legislation, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)<sup>45</sup>, places stringent constraints on health care and prison chaplains alike. While congregations and supporters may crave colorful details about an inmate's past, the days of openly sharing names, biographies, and transformation stories have waned.

**The Trust Factor:** Chaplains must uphold confidentiality; any breach erodes trust. When trust falters, inmates become reticent, and staff refrain from sharing personal information. Correctional officers, often viewing chaplains solely as advocates for inmates, hesitate to discuss their own concerns, fearing inadvertent disclosure to the inmate population. Understanding the distinctions among privileged communication (a legal right), confidentiality (an ethical concept), and privacy (a moral principle invoked by the client) is crucial.

**Navigating Critical Situations:** Prison policy mandates that any indication of self-harm or harm to others by inmates or staff be reported promptly. Following this process meticulously is vital for a chaplain's ongoing ministry. By maintaining a professional, confidential approach, chaplains ensure that inmates and staff receive the necessary assistance, positioning themselves as trusted authorities.

**The Complex Landscape:** In today's litigious environment and with the erosion of privacy due to modern technology, chaplains often find themselves in precarious situations. Balancing solemn commitments moral obligations can be nuanced dilemma: When does inadvertently make them remain elusive, thoughtful essential.<sup>46</sup>

Confidentiality in communication is one of the cornerstones of chaplaincy in prisons.

to confidentiality with legal, ethical, and challenging. Chaplains may grapple with a their commitment to confidentiality complicit? While clear-cut solutions navigation of these complexities remains

<b>4</b>	<p><b>Assigned Reading:</b></p> <p><i>The Character of the Chaplain</i> <i>Walking on Water, Sink or Swim</i></p> <p><b>Research:</b></p> <p>Research several web sites that describe the expected character of chaplains in corrections.</p> <p>Research the End Notes For further study and understanding.</p> <p><b>Briefly research and discuss:</b> What are the similarities and differences between the Church Pastor and the Correctional Chaplains</p>	<p><b>Written Submissions:</b></p> <p>Write a brief reaction paper of 250 words or less containing what you consider to be important.</p> <p>Research several web sites that describe the expected character of the chaplaincy. Record some significant difficulty or ease of finding information of correctional chaplaincy history</p> <p>Respond to the discussion question with 500 words or less.</p>
----------	---	--

## END NOTES

Please note these notes are for accessing other resources.

<sup>1</sup> Peter's faith to step on the water exemplifies the faith needed for chaplaincy. Peter's failure to maintain balance on the surface challenges the chaplain to keep their eyes on Christ. Peter's redemption, reconciliation and restoration provides the chaplain with the motivational force to press onward in the ministry. Matthew 14:28-33; John 21:15-23.

<sup>2</sup> Dale Pace, *A Christian's Guide to Effective Jail & Prison Ministry*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976, p. 227

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, "What is a Pastor to Be and Do?" in *Pastoral Ministry*, ed. MacArthur, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Stan Toler, *Stan Toler's Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry*, (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Pub. 2007), p. 17

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 23-24

<sup>6</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954) p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 61-62

<sup>8</sup> John Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993) p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Alberto Posse, The Definition of Integrity Personifies Leadership, "Ezine Articles," [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alberto\\_Posse](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alberto_Posse)

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell, *Developing the Leader*, p. 40

<sup>11</sup> James M. George, "The Call to Pastoral Ministry," in *Pastoral Ministry* by John MacArthur. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005) p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> Stan Toler. *Stan Toler's Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan, 2007) p. 25 -26

<sup>13</sup> Maxwell, *Developing the Leader*, pages 1-7 provide the following:  
Integrity builds trust  
Integrity has high influence value

---

Integrity facilitates lofty standards  
 Integrity results in a solid reputation, not just an image  
 Integrity means living it myself before leading others  
 Integrity helps a leader be credible, not just clever  
 Integrity is a hard-won achievement

<sup>14</sup> George Ambler, In 'The Face of Adversity, Trust in Leaders Essential for Performance,' "The Practice of Leadership" blog site at <http://www.thepracticeofleadership.net/about/> accessed April 22, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, Developing Leaders, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 45

<sup>17</sup> Stan Toler, Toler's Practical Guide, p. 200-201.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 202

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-consecration.html>

In the Bible, the word consecration means "the separation of oneself from things that are unclean, especially anything that would contaminate one's relationship with a perfect God." Consecration also carries the connotation of sanctification, holiness, or purity. . . In other words, as true believers in Christ, the act of consecration involves our lives being a living sacrifice to Him; we are totally separated from the defilement of the world. Each day, we are to live out our lives as a "holy" and "royal" priesthood to the glory of God, for we are now God's people (1 Peter 2:9-10).

<sup>20</sup> Stan Toler, Guide, p. 107-108

<sup>21</sup> Dale Pace, A Christian's Guide to Effective Jail & Prison Ministry, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976

<sup>22</sup> Charles Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), p. 37

<sup>23</sup> Chaplain Jim Spence, "Preparation and Training," in Effective Jail & Prison Ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, co-ed., Dr. W. Thomas Beckner & Jeff Park (Charlotte, NC: COPE, 1998), p. 56

<sup>24</sup> Spurgeon, Lectures, pp. 37 ff.

<sup>25</sup> James George, "The Call To Pastoral Ministry," in Pastoral Ministry, ed. MacArthur, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 26., p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> The ordination process is extensive in process. In 1 Timothy 3:6 it states, "Not a novice..." indicating a person who has had time to demonstrate and model the characteristics required of a minister. 1 Timothy 3:10 states, "And let these also first be proved;" which implies one who has been through times of testing. Several specific characteristics describe an ordained person. A clergy person is to be "blameless" and of "good reputation." These characteristics take time to develop and establish in the fellowship of the body of Christ. In 1 Peter 5:3 it states, "...but being ensamples to the flock." This demonstrates that time is needed for a candidate to demonstrate fitness as a role model. Chaplains must demonstrate how to live the Christian life for those who would follow them. Finally, in 1 Timothy 5:22 it states, "Lay hands suddenly on no man..." These verses clearly dictate that time is required to adequately test those who are entering the ordination process.

<sup>27</sup> Robert C. Anderson, The Effective Pastor, A Practical Guide to the Ministry (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985), p. 56-57

<sup>28</sup> W. A. Criswell, Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors (Nashville, TN : Broadman Press : 1980), p. 218 Ibid., p. 219

<sup>29</sup> Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormick, The Work of the Chaplain (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, p. 119), 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form\\_follows\\_function](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_follows_function) , 2008. Modified January 11, 2009 at 13:29. Peter-Paul Koch, "Form Follows Function" Digital Web Magazine, 1994-2009, p. 1 of 3. [http://www.digital-web.com/articles/form\\_follows\\_function/](http://www.digital-web.com/articles/form_follows_function/)

<sup>31</sup> "First and Second Timothy provide the chaplain with the *five most important tasks* of an obedient shepherd. (1) to be faithful in his preaching of biblical truth, (2) to be bold in exposing and refuting error, (3) to be an example of godliness to the flock, (4) to be diligent and work hard in the ministry, and (5) to be willing to suffer hardship and persecution in his service for the Lord."

---

<sup>32</sup> The chaplain, although not seen by many as a pastor, is indeed a true shepherd of a flock. He must find his purpose and value in his ministry just like any pastor who shepherds a local church. Therefore, what applies to the pastor applies to the chaplain when it comes to understanding the purpose of the local church.

<sup>33</sup> John MacArthur, "What is a Pastor to Be and Do?" in Pastoral Ministry, ed. MacArthur, (Nelson).

<sup>34</sup> First and Second Timothy provide the chaplain with the *five most important tasks* of an obedient shepherd. (1) to be faithful in his preaching of biblical truth, (2) to be bold in exposing and refuting error, (3) to be an example of godliness to the flock, (4) to be diligent and work hard in the ministry, and (5) to be willing to suffer hardship and persecution in his service for the Lord."

<sup>35</sup> John Maxwell, Developing the Leader Within You, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), p. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Elmer Towns, Biblical Models for Leadership (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2007) p. 137.

<sup>37</sup> John MacArthur, What is a Pastor to Be and Do? in Pastoral Ministry How to Shepherd Biblically by John MacArthur (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Jay Adams, Shepherding God's Flock (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, fourth printing, 1983) p. 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> Towns, Biblical Models, p. 140.

<sup>40</sup> Irvin A. Busenitz, Training for Pastoral Ministry in Pastoral Ministry How to Shepherd Biblically by John MacArthur (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 104-105. He cites D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Preaching and Preachers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. 117.

<sup>41</sup> James M. George, The Call to the Pastoral Ministry in Pastoral Ministry How to Shepherd Biblically by John MacArthur (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 88-89.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Anderson, The Effective Pastor (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 265.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, Effective Pastor, p. 283.

<sup>44</sup> Cowart, John. The Prison Minister's Handbook. (San Jose, CA: Resource Pub., Inc., 1996), p. 149

<sup>45</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health\\_Insurance\\_Portability\\_and\\_Accountability\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_Insurance_Portability_and_Accountability_Act)

<sup>46</sup> Paget and McCormack, Work of the Chaplain, p. 101