HOW TO STAY FAITHFUL IN INNER-CITY MINISTRY

In ministry, few start well,
fewer continue well,
very few finish well.

The reasons for ministry hopping are perhaps at points similar to the reasons people have for hopping from mate to mate in marriage:

1) Lack of commitment
2) Detachment/communication breakdown
3) Bitterness/unforgiveness
4) Unresolved conflicts
5) No vision of what God can do
6) Discontentment ("greener grass")
7) The "honeymoon" is over

I. Make sure you are in the _____ of God as to your vocation and location

How do I know the pastorate is for me?

SEE: I Timothy 3:1-7

1. Examine your _____ (v. 1)
2. Examine your _____ (v. 2-3)
3. Examine your _____ (v. 4-5)
4. Examine your _____ (v. 6)
5. Examine your _____ (v. 7)
6. Examine your _____
   (gifts) (*"apt to teach"* - v. 2) (cp. Phil. 2:13)
7. Examine your _____
   (*"not greedy of filthy lucre"* - v. 3)

How do I know where God wants me?

--Be _____
--Be faithful _____ where you are and God will move you (Acts 13:1ff)
--Let God impress upon you areas of greatest _____
--God will often _____ doors for you
--Be open to recommendations by Godly people

II. Plan to _____ for _____ in the church God leads you to shepherd

(unless He leads you on)
Many unique pressures of the inner-city test the faith and patience of every pastor, such as:

--The problem of _____
--The problems of _____ and _____
--The problems of _____ (property and parking)
--The problems of broken_____
--The problems of diverse_____
--The problem of _____barriers
--The problem of _____/_____

III. Stay _____ on the specific task God has for you to do

IV. Don't be discouraged by _____ your success or failure by _____

God measures ministry by your level of faithfulness.

A. Be faithful in _____ His _____
(John 15:4 - *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."*)

B. Be faithful in _____ _____
(II Timothy 2:15 - *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*)

C. Be faithful in _____ His _____
(Mt. 25:40; Jn. 21:16-17; cp. Ezek. 34)

V. Consider a _____ ministry

VI. Get to know other Godly inner-city pastors and _____ with them

VII. Keep on the complete _____of_____ daily (Ephesians 6:10-18)

VIII. Don't neglect your _____

A. Pick the best_____ possible to move to
(as close to the church as possible)

B. Control the _____influences that are in your power to control

C. Consider _____-_____ your children

D. Involve your _____ in the ministry in practical ways

E. Make _____ to be with your family

What kept Jeremiah going in ministry was three words:

1) _____ (Jer. 1:5)
2) _____ (Jer. 9:1)
3) _____ (Jer. 20:9)

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Introduction:

In ministry, few start well,
fewer continue well,
very few finish well.

For inner-city work, my brief time in New York City perhaps tops the average of many.

But I cannot say with Paul's swan song: *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (II Tim. 4:7).

". . . Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off" (I Ki. 20:11).

The reasons for ministry hopping are perhaps at points similar to the reasons people have for hopping from mate to mate in marriage:

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7) The "honeymoon" is over

Many pastors change churches like people change socks (when this pair begins to stink, we move on to a new pair).

A lack of faithfulness seems to be a mark of American culture today -

--husbands to wives
--parents to children
--employees to employers
--church members to their church
--athletes to franchise
--pastors to their flock

Many restless ministers serve the Lord with their eyes wide open for a way out of their particular part of Christ's vineyard.

I. Make sure you are in the will of God as to your vocation and location

How do I know the pastorate is for me?

You must qualify: morally
domestically
in ability

Many bail out of pastoral ministry because it was never God's will they be in it to begin with (they were never called).

[Note: A pastor's wife is not called to be in the ministry. She is called (like any Christian wife) to follow, support, and help her husband. His call is her call. When wives understand this, it helps them to be content where God has put their husband and not be examining, "Do we belong here or not?" They know they belong until God moves their husband on.]

SEE: I Timothy 3:1-7

1. Examine your desires (v. 1)

2. Examine your character (v. 2-3)

3. Examine your home life (v. 4-5)

4. Examine your maturity (v. 6)

5. Examine your testimony (v. 7)

6. Examine your abilities (gifts) (*"apt to teach"* - v. 2) (cp. Phil. 2:13)

7. Examine your motives (*"not greedy of filthy lucre"* - v. 3)

How do I know where God wants me?

--Be prayerful

--Be faithful serving where you are and God will move you (Acts 13:1ff)

--Let God impress upon you areas of greatest need

--God will often open doors for you

--Be open to recommendations by Godly people

II. Plan to stay put for life in the church God leads you to shepherd

(unless He leads you on)

--Beware of itchy feet

--Beware of greener-grass syndrome

--Beware of the temptation to skip out of conflict and challenges

Many unique pressures of the inner-city test the faith and patience of every pastor, such as:

--The problem of transiency

--The problems of crime and corruption

--The problems of space (property and parking)

--The problems of broken homes

--The problems of diverse cultures

--The problem of language barriers

--The problem of cost/expense

How do I know it is God who is leading me to move on?

--He will probably not lead you on when the church is in a crisis (hang in there and face the challenge)

--He will not lead you on if there is no man ready to fill your shoes

--He will not lead you on if no one else in your church recognizes it

"The greatest oak tree was once a little nut that just held its ground."

III. Stay focused on the specific task God has for you to do

Many comes into the city and get blown out or burnt out because they spread themselves too thin, got involved in too many various ministries (which clamored for their attention.

IV. Don't be discouraged by measuring your success or failure by worldly standards

Don't measure success by the size of ministry ("bodies, bucks, buildings, buses, and baptisms").

By the world's standards, if Christ's earthly ministry was determined by size, He was a failure with only eleven disciples.

God measures ministry by your level of faithfulness.

A. Be faithful in seeking His presence
(John 15:4 - *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."*)

B. Be faithful in sermon preparation
(II Timothy 2:15 - *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*)

C. Be faithful in serving His people
(Mt. 25:40; Jn. 21:16-17; cp. Ezek. 34)

Feed your congregation well and they will be a less cranky people.

V. Consider a team ministry

Luke 10:1 - *"The Lord. . . sent them two and two . . . into every city."*

"*Barnabas and Saul"* (Acts 13:2).
"Barnabas and Mark" (Acts 15:39)
"Paul and Silas" (Acts 15:40)

Consider how Paul worked with men such as Luke, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Demas, etc.

In the inner-city, you need the moral support that comes with team ministry.

VI. Get to know other Godly inner-city pastors and fellowship with them

Help them when and if you can, and you will find yourself being the recipient of their help somewhere down the line.

VII. Keep on the complete armor of God daily (Ephesians 6:10-18)

VIII. Don't neglect your family

(Many leave city ministry and blame it on how their wife couldn't cope with city life, or how they lost their kids to the world.)

A. Pick the best neighborhood possible to move to
(as close to the church as possible)
(cp. John 7:1)

--Takes stress off of wife
--Takes stress off of kids (if they have a place where they can play outdoors safely)
--Provides more peace of mind to you

B. Control the worldly influences that are in your power to control

"I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil."

Teach your children very early in life the reason for holding standards, reasons for avoiding worldly influences.
Teach them to choose their close friends from among Christians. Pray for godly friends for your children.

C. Consider home-schooling your children

The benefits of home-schooling:

D. Involve your children in the ministry in practical ways

--Tract Attacks
--Rest home
--Helping around church
--Burdened for the neighbor kids' salvation

E. Make time to be with your family

--A family day-off each week
--Family vacations and get-aways
--Dates with your wife

CONCLUSION:

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1) Commission (Jer. 1:5)
2) Compassion (Jer. 9:1)

3) Conviction (Jer. 20:9)

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6. **Examine your <u>abilities</u> (gifts) (*"apt to***

teach" - **v. 2) (cp. Phil. 2:13)**

7. Examine your <u>motives</u> (*"not greedy of filthy lucre"* - v. 3)

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