

“Dangerous Calling”
Paul David Tripp
Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft

No one is more influential in your life than you are, because no one talks to you more than you do.

Leaders are content with a devotional life that either doesn't exist or is constantly kidnapped by preparation. Don't let Biblical literacy and theological knowledge define your maturity.

It's possible to be theologically astute and be very immature. It's possible to be biblically literate and be in need of significant spiritual growth

Biblical maturity is never just about what you know; it's always about how grace has employed what you have come to know to transform the way you live

There is a huge difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is an accurate understanding of truth. Wisdom is a matter of understanding and living in light of how that truth applies to the situations and relationships of your daily life. Be careful not to confuse ministry success with God's endorsement of your lifestyle.

The success of a ministry is always more a picture of who God is than a statement of whom the people are that he is using for his purpose.

Signs of a pastor losing his way:

1. He ignored the clear evidence of problems
2. He was blind to the issues of his own heart
3. His ministry lacked devotion

I am more and more convinced that what gives a ministry its motivations, perseverance, humility, joy, tenderness, passion, and grace is the devotional life of the one doing ministry.

There simply is no set of exegetical, homiletical, or leadership skills that can compensate for the absence of this in the life of a pastor.

4. He wasn't preaching the gospel to himself

If you are not requiring yourself to get your deepest sense of well-being vertically, you will shop for it horizontally,

5. He wasn't listening to the people closest to him
6. His ministry became burdensome
7. He began to live in silence
8. He began to question his calling
9. He gave way to fantasies of another life
10. Big theological brains and heart disease

Bad things happen when maturity is more defined by knowing than it is by being. Danger is afloat when you come to love the ideas more than the God whom they represent and the people they are meant to free.

Could it be that in academizing the faith, we have unwittingly made the means to an end the end?

The ultimate purpose of the Word of God is not theological information but heart and life transformation.

Biblical literacy and theological expertise are not, therefore, the end of the Word but a God-ordained means to an end, and the end is a radically transformed life because the worship at the center of that life has been reclaimed.

Academized Christianity, which is not constantly connected to the heart and puts its hope in knowledge and skill, can actually make students dangerous. It is easier to learn theology than to live it.

His study of the Word brings him again and again to his desk, but it seldom brings him to his knees.

Meanwhile his own relationship to Scripture has been more about completing assignments than a devotional nurturing of his soul.

As long as sin is inside of me there will be temptation to exchange God's glory for my own. In ways that are subtle and not so subtle, I begin to pursue the accoutrements of human glory.

Things like appreciation, reputation, success, power, comfort, and control become all too important. Because they are too important to me, they begin to shape the way I think about ministry, the things I want out of my ministry, and the things I do in ministry.

Could it be that much of the tension and despondency that pastors experience is the result of seeking to get things out of ministry that we should not be seeking?

My experience with hundreds of pastors is that many sadly function in a regular state of gospel amnesia.

You begin to look to ministry for identity, security, hope, wellbeing, meaning, and purpose. These are things you will only ever find vertically.

Consider these questions: The absence of what causes us to want to give up and quit? The pursuit of what leads us to feeling overburdened and overwhelmed? The fear of what makes us tentative and timid rather than courageous and hopeful? The craving for what makes us burn the candle at both ends until we have little left? The "need" for what robs ministry of its beauty and joy? The desire for what sets up tensions between ministry and family?

First, in pastoral ministry it is very hard to keep what God says is important, important in your heart.

Also, it is critical to understand that your ministry will always be either propelled by or victimized by what you treasure.

The encroachment of the kingdom of self in ministry is really a matter of shifting treasure.

Biblical literacy is not to be confused with Christian maturity.

If you are not living for God, the only alternative is to live for yourself.

Theology is vitally important, but whatever awe of theology we have is dangerous if it doesn't produce in us a practical awe of God. It is important to acknowledge that local church ministry is one big glory war. Many pastors are better at arguing fine points of doctrine than at stimulating divine wonder.

Somewhere along the way in ministry, too many pastors have forgotten who they are. They have a bloated, distorted, grandiose view of themselves that renders them largely unapproachable and allows them to justify things they think, desire, say, and do that simply are not biblically justifiable.

How many of us have let fear cause us to be too opinionated, too domineering, and too controlling?

You cannot be so sensitive to the opinions of others that you are unable to lead.

It is not an oxymoron to say that there are loads of theologically knowledgeable pastors who, in the way that they live and minister, are spiritually immature.

Public acclaim is often the seedbed for spiritual pride.

So what are the lifestyle tendencies of a pastor who is living and ministering from a position of arrival? Well, if you think you've arrived:

1. You will think that you don't need what you preach
2. You will not be open to the ministry of the body of Christ
3. You will expect of others the perfection that you think you've achieved
4. You will feel qualified to have more control than you have

Somehow, somehow, gospel ministry has become a political battleground for human power.

5. You won't feel the need for daily meditative communion with Christ
6. You will take credit for successes that only grace can produce
7. You will feel entitled to what you could never earn or achieve

Entitlement always seems to follow pride.

8. You will be less than watchful and protective when it comes to temptation and sin
9. You will load more on your ministry than you can reasonable handle

You'll constantly confuse being an ambassador with being a king.

It's hard to trust someone who is too self-assured, too self-aware, too self-congratulatory, too self-important, and too domineering.

It's hard to trust someone who is quick to critique but does not receive criticism very well.

Where are you more dominant than you should be? Where do you fail to listen when you should? Where do you attempt to control things that you don't need to control? Where do you find it hard to delegate ministry to others? Where are you tempted to speak more than you should? Where do you fail to recognize and esteem the gifts of others? Where are you unwilling to examine your weaknesses and admit your failures?

Where are you tempted to think of yourself as more essential than you actually are? Where do you care too much about people's respect, esteem, and appreciation? Where do you find it easier to confront than to receive confrontation? Where are you less than thankful for the ministry partners that God has connected you to? Where are you too confident of your own strength and wisdom? Where does self-trust inhibit ministry-forming trust of Christ? Are there ways in which the health of your ministry is being weakened by self-glory?

You and I must not become pastors who are all too aware of our positions. We must not give way to protecting and polishing our power and prominence. We must resist feeling privileged, special, or in a different category. We must not think of ourselves as deserving or entitled. We must not demand to be treated differently or put on some ministry pedestal. We must not minister from above but from alongside.

Here is the ministry-shaping power of self-glory.

1. Self-glory will cause you to parade in public what should be kept in private
2. Self-glory will cause you to be way too self-referencing

Proud people tend to talk about themselves a lot. Proud people tend to like their opinions more than the opinions of others. Proud people think their stories are more interesting and engaging than others. Proud

people think they know and understand more than others'. Proud people think they've earned the right to be heard. Proud people think they have glory to offer. Proud people, because they are basically proud of what they know and of what they've done, talk a lot about both. Proud people don't reference weakness. Proud people don't talk about failure. Proud people don't confess sin. So proud people are better at putting the spotlight on themselves than at shining the light of their stories and opinions on God's glorious and utterly undeserved grace.

3. Self-glory will cause you to talk when you should be quiet
4. Self-glory will cause you to be quiet when you should speak
5. Self-glory will cause you to care too much about what people think of you
6. Self-glory will cause you to resist facing and admitting your sins, weaknesses and failures
7. Self-glory will cause you to struggle with the blessings of others
8. Self-glory will cause you to be more position oriented than submission oriented
9. Self-glory will cause you to control ministry rather than delegate ministry

You can never fulfill your ambassadorial calling and at the same time want the power and position of a king.

Many pastors out there are seeking to lead and teach well, but it is simply not fueled or directed by the devotion of their hearts to their Savior. Their Christianity is more an institutional discipline than a personal relationship. They are more drawn to ideas than to Jesus. They are more drawn to ministry success than to personal growth. The next phase of the strategic plan fills their eyes more than the glory of God and the grandeur of his grace. They have lost the center of it all, and their hearts have been kidnapped, and many of them don't know it.

They are functionally more in love with ministry than they are in love with Christ.

Daily Bible study, meditation, and prayer have the power and potential to make the glory of God big in our eyes once again.

You must think of yourself not only as an instrument of the work but also as a recipient

Here are some signs that you can look for in your life and ministry that indicate your work as an instrument of grace has caused you to forget or deny your identity as a recipient of that same grace.

1. The Bible has ceased being a mirror
2. Worship morphs from private quest to public duty
3. Christianity becomes a system rather than a relationship
4. Your desire to master content is not coupled with craving
5. You have more concern for the sin of others than for your own
6. The pride of knowing replaces the humility of being known

Let me suggest some vital gospel-in-everyday-life applications that every pastor must preach to himself again and again.

1. I do not have to be anxious that I will never measure up, because Jesus perfectly measure up on my behalf
2. Because grace allows me to get my identity and security vertically, I am freed from building them on what people think of me
3. I do not have to be haunted by what may be exposed about me, because everything that could ever be exposed has already been covered by the blood of Jesus
4. I need to remember that my weaknesses are not in the way of productive ministry, but my delusions of independent strength are
5. I can rest assured that God didn't get a wrong address when he called me to ministry. My spiritual neediness doesn't compromise the message of the Gospel, rather my need preaches it.

6. There is only one Messiah and I am definitely not him

Let me suggest five commitments that should be nailed into each one of our ministry lives.

1. Require yourself to sit under your own teaching and preaching
2. Confess publically to your own struggle
3. Place yourself under wise and biblical counsel
4. Be approachable to your friends and family
5. Build a humbly candid leadership community