

Pitfalls in Ministry by Michael L. Brown

by Micheal L. Brown

The sermon warns against the dangers of pride and emphasizes the necessity of humility and a strong relationship with God to avoid ministry pitfalls.

Duration: 17:42

Scripture: Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 15:33, Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 18:12, Proverbs 22:4, Proverbs 29:23, 1 Corinthians 10:12, James 4:6, James 4:10

Topics: "Spiritual Humility", "Ministry Pitfalls"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, teachability, and staying low before the Lord to avoid falling into moral failures or leading a double life. It highlights the need for genuine dependence on God's grace, prioritizing relationship with the Lord over ministry, maintaining open communication with one's spouse, and avoiding unhealthy patterns that can lead to destructive behaviors. The message underscores the significance of heeding warnings from God and being attentive to caution signs along the spiritual journey.

Transcript

Since I've seen a lot of people, leaders, rise and fall, some people greatly anointed, mightily used, seen many fall, dear friends, co-workers, what's the key to not allowing that to happen in your own life? There are a number of things. First I think it's important to realize that if some of these other people could fall, then I could or you could. That if we think it could never happen to me, that's our first mistake.

Because either pride could come in or we don't see the danger signs clearly enough. It's like someone loses several friends to heart attack because they're all 300 pounds overweight and eating in totally destructive ways and you think that could never happen to me and you get the exact same condition. Same thing will probably happen.

Let him who thinks he stands, take ye lest ye fall, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10-12. And I think it's also important for us to know that those of us who do any kind of ministry, public ministry, have the genuine potential to learn the skill of leading a double life. Now, here's where it comes from.

It comes from something very positive and genuine. For me, I fly overseas, get off the plane, I'm totally jet lagged. I've hardly slept.

It's a 14-hour time differential. I think the first meeting is tomorrow and I get off the plane and say, come on, we've got to hurry, brother. We've got to hurry to the meeting.

The city's waiting for you. Well, you have to get there. You don't even know your name.

You got a splitting headache. You don't feel God anywhere near you. You have to just get up and speak by faith and praise God.

He moves and wonderful. Maybe you're a pastor and right before leaving for the service, you get a call, pray. Our daughter's tried to commit suicide.

She's in the hospital. I'll be there as soon as the service is over. You got that junk you're carrying or you're under the worst spiritual attack of your life and you've got to now minister a deliverance seminar or whatever the thing is.

So you have to be able to shift gears and take hold of God and not be moved by your feelings, your conditions. At the same time, if you're not careful, you can easily develop the ability to perform. I know how to do this, especially if you're not dependent on the anointing for your ministry.

I know how to sing. I know how to play. I know how to speak.

I know how to present. And one of my grads from Long Island in the 80s was part of a charismatic Lutheran church in Ohio. And the pastor was in adultery and was confronted by his board on a Wednesday night before the service.

And with anger, he denied the accusations and really laid a guilt trip on the board for daring to say this about him. Walked out of that board meeting to a service and preached. Now, my former student was there, didn't know any of that background until years later or months later.

But what he did know is that night, the message was so moving that he and all the other people there were at the altar weeping before the Lord. And this is from a guy who had just lied to his board and was lying before God and yet was able to get up and press the right buttons to get tremendous results. It's an eye-opening, scary thing.

I had a time in my life just of being terribly beaten down and under attack and still had a ministry schedule. And I thought, hey, this can happen to you. You can do the very same things.

And especially preach messages you're familiar with. So that possibility of leading a double life is more real than we realize. And we can deceive ourselves as easily as we deceive someone else.

So in light of that, there are a few things I think are really, really important. Aside from the recognition that what happened to someone else could happen to me, a few things. One is stay low and stay teachable and humble.

The day you become too big for people to speak into your life, the day your pride rises because the person speaking to your life is not famous enough or of enough stature to satisfy you, that's a danger sign. When I look at men I was close to and work with that committed adultery or had serious moral failures, three out of the first four men in the first 17 years of my walk in the Lord that were either pastors or leaders in a place where I ministered, three of the four destroyed their ministries through adultery, and the fourth, the wife divorced the husband years later. They were completely different human beings.

I don't know that I know three human beings as different as these three different men. Seriously. And I don't know that I know three people whose anointings and gifts were more different than these three different men.

And when I thought back to what was there in common, there was a certain unaccountable pride in each of the three lives. So I'm not one of these that looks for 90 areas of covering, you know, and thinks I've got to have 11 apostolic relationships in each city. To me it's more of a posture of the heart.

And if I stay low, here's what I know, God gives grace to the humble. And I know the enemy's tried to take me out, and stick around long enough, he'll try to take you out. And I know God has delivered me and rescued me.

Why? Well, he gives grace to the humble. And to me, as long as I lean on him and stay low, that he's going to help me out in real times of danger, or shut the door before somebody could get to me, or before some temptation could, whatever, that he's going to go and deliver. Because realistically, how vigilant are we 24-7 with our spiritual warfare? I mean, I feel that on our best day, when we've got our shield up, keeping the enemy off, that it's about like this, you know, and we've got the rest of us, the rest of our body and our back and everything completely vulnerable, if not for the grace of God.

So I'm very much dependent on God's grace, God's protection. Some gay activist was attacking me the other day as a super egomaniac. And I thought, the thing that's funny about that is, is I'm not particularly impressed with me.

I can far better recite my weaknesses than my strengths, plus I'm married to Nancy. And she's not really impressed with anybody. I mean, she would tell you I'm consistent, I love the Lord, I'm not a hypocrite, you know, but she's not impressed.

Quick little story, quick little story. 1991, I was preaching on Long Island, and I was really distracted by some things that were going on around me, not in the meeting, but some ministry situations. And it was my last message at the school where I taught, the school was closing, the campus was being sold.

It's kind of a sad thing. So this is the end of something, it wasn't an exciting beginning. And as I'm preaching, I see Nancy gets up, comes back in, gets up, comes back in, gets up, comes back in.

And I thought, something is the matter, she gets some reports, something's the matter. So I'm distracted by something else while I'm ministering, some ministry battle in another state with some attacks that were coming our way. I'm distracted by what's going on with her, because it must have been two or three times she got in, came in, out, something's going on, some crisis, some bad situation she's just been informed about.

So the meeting ends, and we're about to go out with some friends for a meal. I said, hon, what was the matter? She goes, that's about the worst message I've ever heard you preach in my life. And I said to the other friends, I said, how do you feel about it? They go, well, I don't know if it was the worst.

I said, okay, I thought there was some real problem. I said, that's it, fine, I don't think it was so good either, and we went out. Well, I shared that with some ministry friends later, and they're like, if my wife ever told me that.

Now, I know some guys are insecure, and they need a wife that says, honey, I can't believe I'm married to you. I just thank God when I see your face in the morning that he privileged me. Some guys need that, you know.

I'm different, I don't need that, I don't need that. And praise the Lord, honey, if that's who you are, and he needs it, help him out. But the thing that struck me was that that would have been jarring for some of these guys.

I thought for your wife to say it's the worst message she's ever heard you preach, what's the big deal? Are we that fragile? Is our ego that fragile? So, as I continue to boast about my humility, seriously though, what Nancy will tell me is look, you have certain gifts. Your mind works a certain way, you can speak a certain way, you can do certain things. None of that matters, you have to have the anointing.

Everything you do is meaningless unless you have the anointing. So it reduces me to this constant recognition of dependence. And as the years have gone on, I've become much more aware of my weaknesses, or how much God's grace operates in my life.

So one thing I think is just really important is to have a healthy recognition of who you really are, your dependence on the Lord, and walk in humility and stay low because God will really rescue you. He'll go out of his way to rescue you. He resists the proud.

You know, it says the mouth of a prostitute is a deep pit and the man who's under the Lord's wrath or cursed by the Lord will fall into it. Someone else doesn't. Why? Rescued by the Lord, the mercy of the Lord.

The other thing is that the number one priority has to be relationship with the Lord and not ministry. I mean, if you want a guaranteed formula for disaster, make ministry the number one priority. And it's hard because ministry is demanding.

You know what I'm saying? You've got your next crusade in Africa. You've got your street outreach. I've got my radio show.

It's demanding and it's there and a lot of what you do pours into that. That's fine as long as it flows out of first things first. And that, I feel, is always a great challenge.

The more successful you are in ministry, the more demands that are put on you. You have to remember God's never calling you to sacrifice your personal life for the sake of ministry. It may cost you your blood.

He's not calling you to sacrifice your soul and your relationship with him. And for everyone that's married, have a candid, open relationship with your spouse. I don't mean that it's healthy to every day you have to confess to each other every wrong thought you thought.

You know, one pastor saying right before he got up to preach, a guy feeling that he needed to confess his sin, he's reading scripture, confess your sin, he went up to the pastor right before the message. I guess greeting people, he said, pastor, I just have to confess, I've always thought you were a total jerk. I just want to ask your forgiveness.

He goes and sits down right before the guy's going to preach, you know. So I don't mean that every last thought is constantly shared, but there has to be candor and openness. And if you ever start to struggle in

an area, that's the one you have to go to because that's the hardest one, you know.

Think of confessing to some person you barely know somewhere, I've had a struggle in this particular area versus confessing that to the person that's closest to you. You know, think if you stole money from somewhere, confessing it to a person that you met at a meeting that you're never going to see again the rest of your life as opposed to confessing it to your boss that you stole it from. So if there's a struggle, got to come clean.

And the way to do it is with your spouse. And the last thing is if you play with fire, you will get burned. It's very rare from my knowledge and experience for someone to just have a big fall in one moment.

It's just like the earthquake, it happens in a moment, but if you could see under the ground, it's been building and building for a number of years. And again, where would God's grace and mercy be if you really tried to serve him with a pure heart for decades and then one weak moment he lets the ground fall out from under you? That's when you'd expect mercy and help and protection to sober you up so you don't make a crazy choice. So it's normally you play with fire, you play with fire, you play with fire, and then the thing gets out of control.

You get burned. So you have to ask yourself, am I cultivating something unhealthy or ungodly? There are little things that I do. When I'm communicating with someone of the opposite sex, an email, do I put in an extra smile? Why did I do that? Did I do that with the guy the same way? One thing that we've just done as habit in communication and also accountability is if I'm writing to someone of the opposite sex, unless it's just some lady somewhere, is it administrating something, needing information? But in any of our circle of people, do you just blind copy Nancy? And then if you realize, wow, I would have said something differently, I would have been slightly more friendly if I wasn't confident that something's wrong.

Why play with that? And then the other question, where do you want this to go? What would be the next logical conclusion? Well, we can be a little chummy and friendly, but we'd never actually do anything. That's how it happens. So that kind of a healthy accountability, relationally healthy communication, keeping a low profile before the Lord in terms of walking humility, and then putting relationship with the Lord before ministry.

I'm quite sure that people who do those things will never fall. And I'm also quite sure that we really have to seriously go against God to seriously blow it. That it's not just going to be one weak moment and you drive by a strip club, and I was telling Larry as we were just driving around the area here a little bit, that I got saved when I was 16, so I never got part of that culture, whatever age you had to be in to go in those places.

So those are, that was, you know, all my life, it's just something I never touched, as worldly as I was for those couple of years, never went near. And I don't know that I've been tempted ever to go, I can't remember, like some getting hit with a heavy temptation to do it. But I'm quite sure if I've been walking with the Lord and seeking to serve him and honor him and I'm not cruising, looking for some bad place or six months out of the word or not praying, I'm just walking with the Lord and honoring him and suddenly some thought hits, you know, going to this place, I'm quite sure it's not going to happen.

You know what I'm saying? We don't just go and do something really stupid. Otherwise, we'd always be doing that, because that's not who we are. We're not that fragile.

Oh, thank God, I made it through another day without committing adultery. Thank God. I mean, maybe one day out of an affair you might think like that.

You know, when I got off drugs, it was like, praise God, I've been off drugs a week. I've been off drugs, it's been six months, this is amazing. But I don't think now, 40 years, 40 years off heroin.

You know what I'm saying? Well, the same way, it's just, oh, okay, 40 years, I haven't slept with another woman. You're not, you're grateful to the Lord, but that's not who you are. Praise God, you haven't committed, you haven't converted to Islam, preaching in that, you I don't think Daniel gets on the plane coming home, oh, thank God, I didn't become a Muslim on this trip.

So I believe in God's keeping power, and I believe in the fact that we're changed. But if we have wrong patterns over a long enough period of time, we can mess up. And that's what it's going to take, a long pattern over a long enough period of time to have a big fall.

And last thought, God's jealous for you and me, and he's jealous for his reputation. And as far as I can tell, before a minister or leader gets exposed publicly, they've had warning after warning after warning privately, because God's jealous for them and he's jealous for the reputation of Jesus. And when it gets to that point, it's not that it's too late ever for their lives, but it gets to that point only after continuing refusal to hear the Lord.

So if something comes your way, a warning, a stop sign along the way, pay attention to it, because it may be real trouble down the road, and maybe we've been so hard we haven't heard. Someone had a prophetic vision for me one time, one of the most intense, difficult times in my life, and really when I knew the enemy was trying to take me out. And they said they saw me going through yellow light after yellow light after yellow light before finally hitting a red light.

And the vision was that God was trying to get my attention with something. And I was driving so fast, I just didn't see it, I didn't see until the red light. So we need to pay attention to the yellow lights, we need to pay attention to the cautions along the way, and out of that, they can be God-sent.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ox9TbO_-LHs.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/micheal-l-brown/pitfalls-in-ministry-by-michael-l-brown/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net