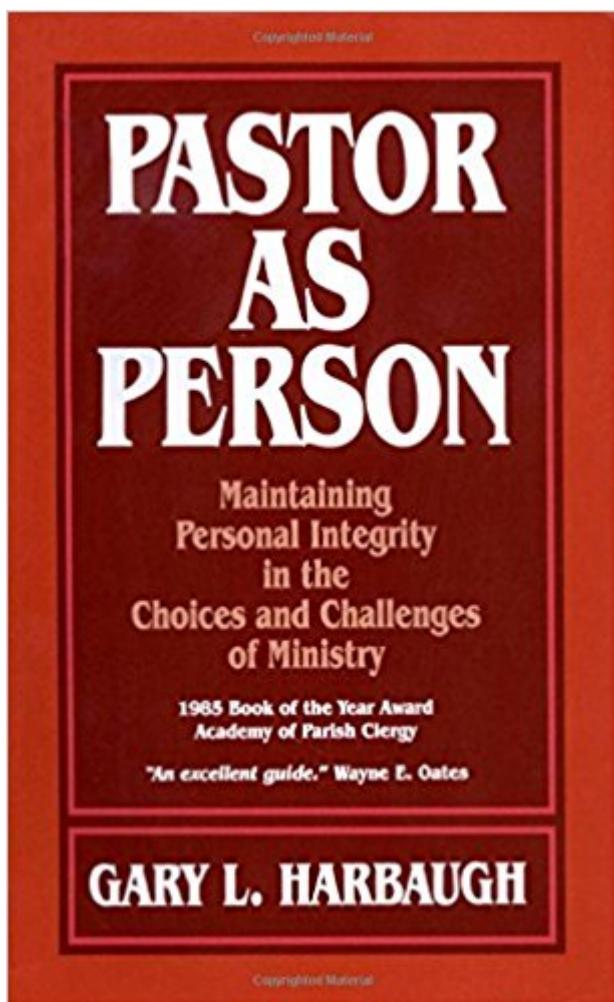


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Pastor As Person: Maintaining Personal Integrity In The Choices And Challenges Of Ministry



Synopsis

Harbaugh captures your interest with dramatic stories of the inner lives of working pastors, weaving these stories into patterns of meaning from his own reflection and research. An excellent study guide for the individual pastor, the pastor's support group, or the seminary class that really wants to come to grips with the dilemmas of being a person who is also a pastor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gary L. Harbaugh, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Pastoral Care, Trinity Lutheran Seminary. He served for ten years as a pastoral resource in the Care for the Caregiver ministry of Lutheran Disaster Response. Dr. Harbaugh's books on spirituality and Christian life include God's Gifted People and The Confident Christian, both available from Augsburg Fortress.

Awesome book! Really hit home when reading it and found myself relating to a couple of the pastors in the case studies. Very enjoyable read. Easy read too. Glad it was a required text for seminary. It brought home the idea that pastors are people too that think and feel,

A good read and easy to follow

I have not received this book that was has been paid for the book was purchased for a seminary class I do not feel that it is right to pay for something and not receive it from the owner

I. Authors Purpose(s) According to the preface, Dr. Gary Harbaugh's intended purpose for this book is to write about the "thoughts, feelings and behaviors" of the pastor as a person. His intention is to shed light on the anthropological, behavioral sciences, theologies and philosophies that affect pastoral situations and perspectives (pg.9). However upon closer inspection Mr. Harbaugh reveals a slightly more personal objective . Although Harbaugh claims to be writing about a holistic approach to the life of the minister, in reality this is only secondary. Instead; as the book comes to a near end Dr. Harbaugh begins to reveal what he calls a much more "personal perspective" (pg.125). In the closing paragraph this objective is then revealed. In it Harbaugh writes, "It is my hope that your reading of this book, as a seminarian preparing for the ordained ministry or as a pastor in the midst of ministry, has resulted in your feeling less alone in your struggles and more affirmed as a person" (pg.150).

II. Survey of Covered Topics / Agreement and Disagreement

Chapter 1. The opening chapter of the book is an introduction to the book's characters. It is also an introduction into Dr. Harbaugh's view of holistic ministry. According to Harbaugh the pastor must reflect in his or her work a whole person of God. The assertion is that a pastor must be complete and must experience his work, life and ministry as a complete person or nephesh: a living soul, in order to minister in a proper and effective manner. *There is also a rather lengthy discussing on personal history, choice and context.

Chapter 2. The second chapter of this book deals with the pastor as a physical person. Here Harbaugh writes about stress, and burnout. In telling the story of Hezekiah's Tunnel, the author exposes the underlining truths behind stress as well as both the pastor's common and proper reactions to stress. According to Dr. Harbaugh "Real Growth in life and in faith comes from accepting responsibility for doing what we can, and accepting our inability to do all that is necessary. We to must come to the point of recognizing that even our best efforts to control our lives are ultimately not good enough." Christ alone, he states "is the solid rock on which a (w)holistic response to stress can stand" (pg61).

Chapter 3. Chapter three of this work discusses the topic of the pastor as a thinking person. In this section Dr. Harbaugh identifies a proper balance between the vocational role and the personal life of the parson. Interestingly this portion of the book does suggest a number of commonalities in the character of the cleric. However, while Harbaugh concurs that mutual traits exist he also asserts a necessity for individualism, room for change and a melding of ones personality and indeed ones whole self into ones ministerial experience.

Chapter 4. In the fourth chapter, Dr. Gary Harbaugh introduces the character of Pastor John Jeffrich. This story of grief and its subsequent context are used to communicate how the pastor deals with his or her congregation as a human person complete with emotions and reactions. The suggestion is that one

cannot shepherd the grieving if he or she does not allow themselves to grieve. Harbaugh writes, "The very weakness of the pastor therefore becomes strength in ministry" (pg100). Chapter 5. The fifth chapter of the book illustrates the pastor as he or she relates to others. The chapter also presents a special emphasis on the issues of anger, conflict and authority. Much of this chapter deals with a coming to terms with the need to face these issues with acceptance. The pastor as a person is said to be independent only in the acceptance of other authorities. The personhood of the pastor is then, in part, based upon his or her ability to acknowledge his or her strengths and weaknesses as a whole person of God. Chapter 6. The final chapter of this book is about choice. The focus of this section is on the experience of choice and both its positive and negative consequence in relation to faith/freedom and challenge/opportunity. Choice and risk are presented as essentials of the Christian faith. Readers are encouraged to "choose life, today and each day, in the confidence that [we] have already been chosen by God" (pg150). Agreement and Disagreement: A Critical Assessment Negatives Although this is not a true issue of content, I could not review this book without the assertion that the opening chapter is dull and sluggish. With chapter one Dr. Gary Harbaugh follows an extremely well presented introduction with a rather clinical assessment of the human self. In my opinion much of this section is unnecessary and could have been presented in a better way. In addition, I also found the closing statements to be largely incomplete and lacking in clear conclusions. Another point of contention comes again from this early section where Dr. Harbaugh discusses the issue of human choices. I found much difficulty with the following concept: "choices reflect values" (pg36). Although I am not content to fully dismiss this idea I have seen a few exceptions to this rule. While I believe the majority of choices do reflect our personal values I would exclude stressful, inattentive or remissive decisions and I would exited the assumption of choices reflecting personal values to also reflecting representative values of others. By this I mean that many choices are made quickly and or, out of an apparent lack of options. In addition I would suggest that certain choices are intentionally made only as representatives of others. A member of the House of Representatives for example might "choose" if you can call it that, to sign a bill only because his choice to sign or not sign is only granted to his or her as spokesperson for others. I would also pursue with caution the advice to grieve with the grieving. Although I agree that a pastor's humanity cannot subside to his or her vocational fears or transference and that a true and caring pastor must first care to be caring I would also suggest that this can all too easily be corrupted. (pg89). Pastors must always be careful to be nothing more than honest and real with parishioners and to allow the attention to go where it belongs; to those who grieve the deepest. This is delicate balance. Lastly I came to the following statement with certain

reservations: "In protestant seminaries, a high percentage of students are married when they enter school or become married during the seminary years. Yet few seminaries have any intentional program for working with engaged or married seminary couples (pg118). Again, while I agree that seminaries must be willing to think and work with couples, I also believe that seminaries and more to the point - parishioners, need to be aware that just because God has called a pastor into ministry that does not mean that God has automatically called that persons spouse. It is a wide-reaching and foolish mistake to assume that there is any such thing as "the role of a pastor's wife" as it has been called. Churches must learn to see the spouse of the minister as they would any other active member of the congregations and no differently. In turn, seminaries must not do anything to impede this progression while at the same time providing for those more active couples at the same time. It is a delicate balance. Positivel found myself very appreciative of the following statement, "I am my history" (pg29). Clearly we are ambassadors of our past whether intentionally or not. I also fondly look upon the words, "I am my context" (pg32). Although I feel that little can be said on the issue, I believe categorically that context determines all progression. Without choices, there can be no choice. In addition I found the following four segments to be especially positive:1. On page 55 there is a rather wonderful discussion about stress and isolation. In this section the author writes about how pastors separate themselves from the outside world, from family, from parishioners and from other pastors. Most interestingly though I found the assertion that people in ministry often see other pastors as competitors to be exceedingly odd. (pg55) Perhaps it is my limited exposure but I have never thought nor witnessed anything remotely similar to this. Yet I can see the ease at which it could happen.2. On page seventy there is some discussion on the common characteristics of ministry professionals. In this section I found it extremely interesting to see extroversion included. Interestingly I have not seen this to be the case either. As a matter of fact I have seen much more of a polarization than anything in these regards. Often the pastors I know are involved in rather large sways. They go from being very extroverted when deemed "necessary" to homebodies when deemed appropriate.III. Application to Ministry Truly it is a sad state of affairs when someone can find nothing to substantiate application. However this is certainly not the difficulty at present. There are rather a large number of applicable ministry materials in Dr. Harbaugh's book. At this point I cannot help but to be confused by the fact that this book is now out of print. Sometimes, usually in fact I find myself to be somewhat overly critical in regards to assigned reading material. More to the point, I find it significantly helpful to do so. Ironically, on this particular occasion; an occasion when I have much to say in the way of the positive, there is very limited space to do so. Therefore I have condensed this section into five short points. They are as follows:1. While many seminarians often

attempt to assimilate themselves into the commonly pictured epitomes of the mind, I find that this is a terrible error. The role of pastor is not a part to play or goal to reach. It is a part of the whole. One does not become a pastor by emulation of others or by excluding the self for a new self; a pastor self, but through the inclusion of the new with what is already the self.² Due to the high level of stress involved in the pastorate and because of the high numbers of so-called "burn out", it is necessary to have a support group from within the parish and also from outside the parish in the form of a local ministerial.³ Conflict is always to be dealt with as early as possible. And a pastor must be willing to own the blame that is his or hers.⁴ While roles may differ, a pastor is to be the same person in everything and at all times. The pastor as father or husband for example should not be different than the pastor as caregiver or counselor in terms of personality and character. The wearing of masks will only hinder the ability to function properly.⁵ The first responsibility for every pastor is for the self. Though it sounds selfish it is not. In order to properly reflect Christ-likeness it is necessary to be seeking Christ-likeness. The pastor's first ministry is from God to self and visa-versa, only then can the people be properly lead: only by a servant-leader. Rating the BookOrganization[7] The week concluding statement creates a feeling that something is out of place. Clear statement of purpose[8] The statements are clear though they seem somewhat secondary. Readability[8] The book is a simple read with the exception of the opening few pages on psychology and life cycle. (Though this section is not difficult, it is rather slow.) Informative content[9] It believe it is very informative Usefulness for your understanding and practice of ministry[9] This book is a very valuable resource. It is one of those keep it around and read it every five years kind of books.

The case studies in this book are exceptional and real. If you are in pastoral ministry, this book is a must. Harbaugh unpacks the realities of ministry--and life as well, in a way that makes real sense. I would recommend this book to anyone who aspires to undertake pastoral ministry. Whether you are just beginning your ministry or if you are an experienced pastoral care provider, this book will resonate with you. It is a great read--it is one of the few that I find myself reading over and over again. Get the book--you'll be glad you did.

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